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Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents
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Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By: Sara B. McPeak

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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

In re application of:

James R. Shay et al.

Application No.: 09/997,311

Filed: November 27, 2001

For: Computer Implemented Method
For Controlling Document Edits

Customer No.: 20350

Confirmation No.: 3014

Examiner: Patrick J. D. Santos

Art Unit: 2161

APPELLANT'S BRIEF
UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 41.37

Mail Stop Appeal Brief - Patents
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Appellant offers this Brief further to the Notice of Appeal mailed on September 1, 2005.

1. Real Parties In Interest

First To File, Inc. of Menlo Park, California is the real party in interest as the assignee of the above-identified application.

2. Related Appeals And Interferences

No other appeals or interferences are known that will directly affect, are directly affected by, or have a bearing on the Board decision in this appeal.

3. Status Of Claims

Claims 1-37 are currently pending in the application. All pending claims stand finally rejected pursuant to a final Office Action mailed March 1, 2005. The rejections of claims 1-37 are believed to be improper and are the subject of this appeal. A copy of the claims as rejected is attached as Appendix A.

Claims 1-6, 9-16 and 18-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 5,870,089 to Fabbio et al. (hereinafter "Fabbio") in view of US Patent No. 5,031,214 to Dziwit et al. (hereinafter "Dziwit"), and in further view of webpage www.legalstar.com, as archived by the WAYBACK MACHINE™ (www.archive.org) on April 21, 1999 (hereinafter "LegalStar").

Claims 7 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziwit and LegalStar in combination in view of the publication entitled "Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Revision Control System by Tichey, published 1982 (hereinafter "Tichey").

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziwit and LegalStar in combination in view of the website www.adobe.com, as archived by the WAYBACK MACHINE™ (www.archive.org) on January 25, 1999 (hereinafter "Adobe").

4. Status Of Amendments

The claims have been amended once in this case. The amendment was filed on November 10, 2004 in response to the non-final Office Action mailed August 10, 2004. No

amendments have been entered subsequent to the final Office Action mailed March 1, 2005.
This Appeal Brief is filed in response to the final Office Action.

5. Summary Of Claimed Subject Matter

In the following summary, Appellant has provided exemplary references to sections of the specification and drawings supporting the subject matter defined in the claims as required by 37 C.F.R. §41.37. The specification and drawings also include additional support for other exemplary embodiments encompassed by the claimed subject matter. Thus, it should be appreciated that the references are intended to be illustrative in nature only.

The claimed embodiments generally relate to controlling document edits in an electronic document management system. Application, page 4, para. 11. For example, embodiments of the invention provide for controlling document edits for electronic documents to be submitted to a patent office. Id. In the embodiment of claim 1, a method of controlling document edits comprises storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. The plurality of electronic documents are associated with a patent application. Id. at page 16, para 52. A first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office is received from a user. Id. In response, the one or more electronic documents are automatically locked into a non-editable form. Id. Furthermore, in the embodiment of claim 7 automatically locking includes automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to a locked image file. Id. at page 18, para 58 and page 19, para 59. The locked image files are displayed in a file history portion of a graphical user interface, wherein the file history portion of the graphical user interface provides a record of documents submitted to a patent office. Id. at page 18, para 58 In the embodiment of claim 8, the locked image file is a locked .pdf file. Id.

In the embodiment of claim 12, a method of controlling document edits comprises storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. The plurality of electronic documents are associated with a patent application. Id. at page 16, para 52. A package is created including one or more of the electronic documents. Id. at page 17, para 54. The package is displayed in a first folder of a graphical user interface. Id. The one or more electronic documents in the package are automatically locked down when a user transmits a first signal indicating that the package has been transferred from a first phase to a second phase. Id. at page 16, para 52 and page 17, para. 54. Locking down the one or more documents prevents further editing of the one or more documents. Id. Furthermore, in the embodiment of claim 17, automatically locking includes automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to a locked image file. Id. at page 18, para 58 and page 19, para 59. The locked image files are displayed in a file history portion of a graphical user interface, wherein the file history portion of the graphical user interface provides a record of documents submitted to a patent office. Id. at page 18, para 58

In the embodiment of claim 20, a method of controlling document edits comprises storing a plurality of electronic documents on a computer system. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. Each electronic document has a native format type. Id. at page 12, para 42 and page 15, para. 52. A package is created including one or more of the electronic documents. Id. at page 17, para 54. A first signal indicating that package is ready to be filed in a patent office is received from a user. Id. at page 15, para 52. The one or more electronic documents are automatically transformed from its native format types into a format type that is viewable as it will be printed. Id. at page 19, para 59. The transformed one or more electronic documents are displayed to a remote user. Id.

In the embodiment of claim 32, a computer system for controlling document edits comprises a processor and a computer readable medium. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. The computer readable medium comprise instructions executable by the

processor to store a plurality of alterable electronic documents. Id. The plurality of electronic documents are associated with a patent application. Id. at page 16, para 52. A first signal is received indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. Id. The one or more electronic documents to be filed in a patent office are automatically lock into a non-editable form. Id.

In the embodiment of claim 34, a computer program embodied on a computer readable medium comprises instructions to store a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. The plurality of electronic documents are associated with a patent application. Id. at page 16, para 52. A first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office is received. Id. The one or more electronic document are locked into a non-editable form. Id.

In the embodiment of claim 35 a method of electronically filing a document in a patent office comprises storing a document on a computer system. Id. at page 16, para. 52 and page 8, para. 32, and Fig. 2. The document is associated with a patent application. Id. at page 16, para 52. A user is allowed to edit the document. Id. A signal is received from a user indicating that the document is ready to be filed. Id. In response to the signal, the document is automatically locked to prevent further edits to the document. Id. The document is converted from a first document type to a second document type. Id. at page 19, para 59. The document is electronically filed with a patent office via an interface to an electronic filing system of the patent office. Id. at page 18, para 58.

6. Grounds Of Rejection Presented For Review

Issue 1: Whether claims 1-6, 9-16 and 18-37 were properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio in view of Dziwit, and in further view of LegalStar,

Issue 2: Whether claims 7 and 17 were properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziewit and LegalStar in combination in view of Tichey.

Issue 3: Whether claim 8 was properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziewit and LegalStar in combination in view of Adobe.

7. Argument

A. Whether claims 1-6, 9-16 and 18-37 were properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio in view of Dziewit, and in further view of LegalStar.

In order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the Office Action must establish: 1) some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the references or combine their teachings; 2) a reasonable expectation of success of such a modification or combination; and 3) a teaching or suggestion in the cited prior art of each claimed limitation. See MPEP §706.02(j). Appellants respectfully argue that the final Office Action has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness for at least the reasons presented below. More specifically, the cited references, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest every limitation of any claim pending in the application.

Claim 1, upon which claims 2-11, 25, 26, and 29 depend, recites “receiving from a user a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office.” The Office Action posits that Fabbio’s disclosure of a “notification” teaches this element. Fabbio clearly teaches, however, that the “notification service” of Fabbio’s system is merely a delivery notification service that can inform the user of the delivery status of a package. (*see, e.g.*, c. 3, ll. 40-41; c. 6, ll. 6-8; c. 8, ll. 2-5, 21-22). In fact, Fabbio’s use of the term “notification” relates exclusively to notifications from the system to the user. Clearly, such a notification neither teaches nor suggest receiving a notification from a user. More broadly, Fabbio is directed toward a system for sending packages of documents to a variety of devices,

including fax machines, printers, etc. Notwithstanding Fabbio's teaching that one such "device" can be an email address (*see* c. 3, ll. 3-11), Fabbio nowhere even suggests filing a document anywhere, let alone a patent office. Fabbio simply cannot be read to teach or suggest "receiving from a user a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office."

Claim 1 further recites "automatically locking the one or more electronic documents into a non-editable form." The Office Action asserts that Dziewit teaches this element. While Dziewit does teach the concept of "locking" a document, Dziewit's locking mechanism clearly fails to teach that locking a document puts that document into a non-editable form. Instead, Dziewit (c. 10, ll. 8-13) teaches that "subroutine file lock 202 . . . loads file 'contract' into the document authentication software 143 and prevents unauthorized access or modification of this file. At this stage the file can be edited by preauthorized users (the contracting parties)" (emphasis added). Clearly, a document "locked" by Dziewit's system remains in an editable form. It is notable that the only portions (other than the abstract) of Dziewit cited in the Office Action are two "means" limitations of the claims. One of these limitations (claim 4) simply recites "means . . . for disregarding any further document modification signals transmitted by said individual to said processor." This does not teach that the document is non-editable, however. It simply means that "said individual" cannot edit the document; clearly, it is possible that other users could edit the document. Read in light of the specification, therefore, if claim 4 actually recites the "lock subroutine", then "said individual" must simply be an unauthorized user. The other claim cited by the Office Action (claim 8) recites "means responsive to said disabling means and said confirming means for preventing said processor from modifying said document." It is unclear to what function in the specification this limitation refers, since nothing in the specification seems to support this limitation. Clearly, however, it does not refer to the document locking subroutine discussed above. Moreover, without some support in the specification, this limitation cannot be considered an enabling disclosure sufficient to teach the element recited in claim 1. Hence, because the "document locking" described in Dziewit plainly allows preauthorized users to edit the "locked" document,

the document locking of Dziewit cannot be read to teach or suggest “automatically locking the one or more electronic documents into a non-editable form,” as claim 1 recites.

Finally, the Office Action concedes neither Fabbio nor Dziewit disclose that the electronic documents are associated with a patent application or that a signal (which neither Fabbio nor Dziewit discloses) might indicate that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. The Office Action asserts, however, that LegalStar discloses electronic patent forms. Clearly, however, the LegalStar documents (which are in a product called “IP LegalForm”) are merely electronic “templates” that may be filled out by a user and printed. Nothing in LegalStar suggests a signal indicating that such documents are to be filed in a patent office.

Hence, the cited references, even if combined, fail to disclose each limitation of claim 1. Moreover, even if the teachings of these references could be cobbled together to teach or suggest the limitations of any claims, none of the references nor the art in general provide any suggestion or motivation to combine them in the asserted manner. Merely by way of example, Fabbio teaches a versatile system for sending documents to a variety of devices, of which an email address is but one. More importantly, Fabbio teaches only one-way communication, even in the context of email. By contrast, Dziewit teaches a collaborative system for producing contracts, wills, etc., whereby multiple parties edit a document, which is authenticated by Dziewit’s system. Nothing in Fabbio teaches any need for such authentication; further, since, Fabbio teaches the emailing of documents from one system to another, it is difficult to see how Dziewit, which handles document coordination through its own process, could be combined with Fabbio to produce any operable system.

Similarly, claim 12, upon which claims 13-19, 27, 28, and 30 depend, recites in part “storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application . . . and automatically locking down the one or more electronic documents in the package when a user transmits a first signal

indicating that the package has been transferred from a first phase to a second phase, wherein locking down the one or more documents prevents further editing of the one or more documents." As discussed above with reference to claim 1, none of the references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents associated with a patent application and automatically locking down the documents when a user transmits a first signal indicating that the package has been transferred from a first phase to a second phase, wherein locking down the one or more documents prevents further editing of the one or more documents. Rather, Fabbio teaches only one-way communication to the user, not from the user. Dziewit teaches a collaborative system for producing contracts, wills, etc., and restricts access to authorized users. Furthermore, nothing in Fabbio or Dziewit teaches or suggests electronic documents associated with a patent application or a signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. LegalStar documents are merely electronic "templates" that may be filled out by a user and printed but nothing in LegalStar suggests a signal indicating that such documents are to be filed in a patent office.

Claim 20, upon which claims 21-24 and 31 depend, recites in part "receiving from a user a first signal indicating that package is ready to be filed in a patent office." As discussed above with reference to claim 1, none of the references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest receiving a signal from a user indicating that a document or package is ready to be filed in a patent office. Rather, Fabbio teaches only one-way communication to the user, not from the user. Dziewit teaches a collaborative system for producing contracts, wills, etc., and restricts access to authorized users. Furthermore, nothing in Fabbio or Dziewit teaches or suggests electronic documents associated with a patent application or a signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. LegalStar documents are merely electronic "templates" that may be filled out by a user and printed but nothing in LegalStar suggests a signal indicating that such documents are to be filed in a patent office.

Claim 32, upon which claim 33 depends, and claim 34 each recite in part "stor[ing] a plurality of alterable electronic documents, the plurality of electronic documents

being associated with a patent application; [and] receiv[ing] a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office." Similarly, claim 35, upon which claims 36 and 37 depend, recites in part "storing a document on a computer system, wherein the document is associated with a patent application . . . [and] receiving a signal from a user that the document is ready to be filed." As discussed above with reference to claim 1, none of the references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application and receiving a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. Rather, Fabbio teaches only one-way communication to the user, not from the user. Dziewit teaches a collaborative system for producing contracts, wills, etc., and restricts access to authorized users. Furthermore, nothing in Fabbio or Dziewit teaches or suggests electronic documents associated with a patent application or a signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office. LegalStar documents are merely electronic "templates" that may be filled out by a user and printed but nothing in LegalStar suggests a signal indicating that such documents are to be filed in a patent office.

The Office Action further suggests that one skilled in the art would be motivated to combine this inoperable system with LegalStar's "electronic documents" for "the electronic filing of documents as per LegalStar." As noted above, however, LegalStar does not teach electronic filing of documents. Moreover, the asserted need to "provide the advantage of rendering electronic documents such as that of LegalStar '99 the degree of trust associated with paper documents, thus providing for automation of the patent application process" is nonsensical, since LegalStar, by its nature, is capable of producing only paper documents, not documents that can be filed electronically, and it is difficult to see how any indicia of trust associated with the electronic document could apply to a printed copy as well. Hence, there is no cognizable suggestion or motivation to combine these three references in the contemplated manner.

Therefore, Appellants argue that the Office Action fails to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. For at least these reasons, Appellants believe that the rejection of claims 1-

6, 9-16 and 18-37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper and that the claims are in condition for allowance.

B. Whether claims 7 and 17 were properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziewit and LegalStar in combination in view of Tichey.

Appellants respectfully argue that the Office Action has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness for at least the reasons presented above with regard to claims 1 and 12 upon which claims 7 and 17 respectively depend. Moreover, in rejecting claim 7, the Office Action contends that Tichey's revision control system teaches a file history portion of a graphical user interface. While Tichey does teach the maintenance of a history of particular files, it fails to teach that this file history has anything to do with a graphical user interface (indeed, given the state of technology in 1982, it would be difficult to see how Tichey could teach a graphical interface). Moreover, the term "file history" is a term of art, as one skilled in the art would appreciate, and the applicants respectfully submit that the Office Action misperceives the scope of claim 7 in rejecting that claim. To more clearly indicate its scope, claim 7, as amended, now recites that "the file history portion of the graphical user interface provides a record of documents submitted to a patent office." Clearly, neither Tichey nor any of the other cited references teach or suggest claim 7 in its current form. For at least these reasons, Appellants believe that the rejection of claims 7 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper and that the claims are in condition for allowance.

C. Whether claim 8 was properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fabbio, Dziewit and LegalStar in combination in view of Adobe.

Appellants respectfully argue that the Office Action has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness for at least the reasons presented above with regard to claims 1 and 12 upon which claims 7 and 17 respectively depend. Therefore, Appellants believe that the

rejection of claims 1-6, 9-16 and 18-37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper and that the claims are in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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CLAIMS APPENDIX

The claims pending in the application are as follows.

1. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits comprising:

storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;

receiving from a user a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office; and

automatically locking the one or more electronic documents into a non-editable form.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the one or more electronic documents in a package prior to generating the first signal.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising allowing a user to perform a manual verification of the locked electronic documents prior to filing the documents in the patent office.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising electronically filing the electronic documents in the patent office.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising generating a first lock signal in response to the first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or more electronic documents.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein the automatically locking includes automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to a locked image file.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 further comprising displaying the locked image files in a file history portion of a graphical user interface, wherein the file history

portion of the graphical user interface provides a record of documents submitted to a patent office.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein the locked image file is a locked .pdf file.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving a second signal indicating that the one or more of the electronic documents are final draft documents.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein each electronic document has a native format type, the method further comprising generating a first lock signal in response to the second signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or more electronic documents in their native format types, and generating a second lock signal in response to the first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from their native format types to locked image files.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic documents include a provisional patent application specification, non-provisional patent application specification, response to an Office Action, inventor declaration, assignment, power of attorney, or patent drawings.

12. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits comprising:

storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;

creating a package including one or more of the electronic documents, the package being displayed in a first folder of a graphical user interface; and

automatically locking down the one or more electronic documents in the package when a user transmits a first signal indicating that the package has been transferred from a first phase to a second phase, wherein locking down the one or more documents prevents further editing of the one or more documents.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a final draft phase and the second phase is a ready to file phase.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a final draft phase and the second phase is a filed phase.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a filed phase and the second phase is a transmitted phase.

16. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein automatically locking includes automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to a locked image file.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising displaying the locked image files in a file history portion of a graphical user interface, wherein the file history portion of the graphical user interface provides a record of documents submitted to a patent office.

18. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the each electronic document has a native format type, the method further comprising generating a first lock signal in response to the first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or more electronic documents in their native format types, and generating a second lock signal in response to a second signal indicating the package has been transferred from the second phase to a third phase, and in accordance therewith, automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from their native format types to locked image files.

19. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein the electronic documents include a provisional patent application specification, non-provisional patent application specification, response to an Office Action, inventor declaration, assignment, power of attorney, or patent drawings.

20. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits comprising:

storing a plurality of electronic documents on a computer system, each electronic document having a native format type;
creating a package including one or more of the electronic documents;
receiving from a user a first signal indicating that package is ready to be filed in a patent office;
automatically transforming the one or more electronic documents from its native format types into a format type that is viewable as it will be printed; and
displaying the transformed one or more electronic documents to a remote user.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 further comprising locking the transformed one or more documents.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20 further comprising generating a signal indicating that the package can be filed.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 further comprising entering the package into an outgoing mail queue.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23 further comprising electronically filing the package in a patent office.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a second signal indicating that the one or more electronic documents needs to be edited; and
automatically unlocking the one or more documents into an editable form.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein electronically filing the electronic documents in the patent office comprises transmitting the electronic documents to the patent office via an interface to an electronic filing system of the patent office.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, further comprising electronically filing the one or more electronic documents in a patent office.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein electronically filing the one or more electronic documents to the patent office comprises transmitting the electronic documents to the patent office via an interface to an electronic filing system of the patent office.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the first signal comprises a user moving a document from a first section of a graphical interface to a second section of a graphical interface.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the first signal comprises the user moving a document from a first section of a graphical interface to a second section of a graphical interface.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein electronically filing the package in a patent offices comprises transmitting the electronic documents to the patent office via an interface to an electronic filing system of the patent office.

32. (Previously Presented) A computer system for controlling document edits, the computer system comprising a processor and a computer readable medium comprising instructions executable by the processor to:

store a plurality of alterable electronic documents, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;

receive a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office; and

automatically lock into a non-editable form the one or more electronic documents to be filed in a patent office.

33. (Previously Presented) The computer system of claim 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of documents is stored on a second computer system, and wherein the computer readable medium comprises further instructions executable by the processor to:

load the at least one of the plurality of documents from the second computer system onto the computer system prior to locking the one or more of the electronic documents.

34. (Previously Presented) A computer program embodied on a computer readable medium, the computer program comprising instructions executable by a computer to:

store a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;

receive a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic documents are to be filed in a patent office; and

automatically lock the one or more electronic document into a non-editable form.

35. (Previously Presented) A method of electronically filing a document in a patent office, the method comprising:

storing a document on a computer system, wherein the document is associated with a patent application;

allowing a user to edit the document;

receiving a signal from a user that the document is ready to be filed;

in response to the signal, automatically locking the document to prevent further edits to the document;

converting the document from a first document type to a second document type;

electronically filing the document with a patent office via an interface to an electronic filing system of the patent office.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the document is selected from the group consisting of a provisional patent application specification, a non-provisional patent application specification, a response to an Office Action, an inventor declaration, an assignment, a power of attorney, and a patent drawing.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the document is a plurality of documents associated with a patent application, the method further comprising:

grouping the plurality of documents into a package to be filed electronically;

wherein electronically filing the patent document comprises electronically filing the package.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None